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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 KABUL 000851

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DEPT FOR SA/FO AMBASSADOR QUINN, S/CT, SA/A, G KATE  
FRIEDRICH, G/IWI CHARLOTTE PONTICELLI AND DIANNE GRAHAM  
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN, KAMEND  
CENTCOM FOR POLAD, CG CFC-A, CG CJTF-76  
TREASURY FOR LMC DONALD, WBALDRIDGE, APARAMESWARAN, ABAUKOL  
STATE PLEASE PASS USAID  
USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/04/2015  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [AF](#)  
SUBJECT: PRT FARAH - GOVERNOR WASIFI SINGS ECONOMIC  
PROTOCOLS WITH IRAN

Classified By: DCM RICHARD NORLAND FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) Summary. Farah Province,s Governor Isatollah Wasifi met with officials of Bejend and Meshand in the city of Bejend in the province of South Khorasan in northern Iran December 20-27. They discussed joint border control, economic expansion and construction, cultural, and education projects. South Khorosan officials agreed with the importance of connecting Farah to the Persian Gulf and to improve treatment of Afghan refugees. Officials signed protocols covering border issues, economic cooperation, and education. The agreements require GOA endorsement, as yet forthcoming. Wasifi has received invitations to visit the Iranian province of Baluchistan on Farah,s southern border for similar discussions and reported Iran hoped to construct roads and open the border to Nimroz and Helmond Provinces to facilitate movement of Iranian goods from the Persian Gulf. Although little has yet resulted from such talk, the multiple discussions indicate the possibility of a large scale, coordinated Iranian plan. End Summary.

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The Participants  
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12. (C) In mid January, Governor Wasifi and Deputy Governor Haji Mohammad Jurna Ghanghor recounted to PRToff trip details and agreements made during their December visit to Iran. The delegation also included the Directors of the Departments of Education, Rural Reconstruction Development, Agriculture, and Finance, the Mayor of Farah City, the Provincial Secretary, and businessman Aryob Rafiqi. Rafiqi, characterized by Wasifi as a childhood friend, is now a Kandahar entrepreneur and informal economic adviser to the Governor. The Iranian delegation, headed by Iswa Fahah, Governor of South Khorosan Province, included Bejend and Meshand city officials. While Wasifi stated no central government officials were present, Ghanghor declared he and the governor had met with Iranian

diplomats and military intelligence representatives, who expressed interested in PRT activities and strength. Ghanghor assumed other central governmental representatives were present during the negotiations and was aware of intelligence activity by hotel workers.

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With Hands Wide Open  
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13. (C) Wasifi characterized his approach to the officials of the Province of South Khorosan as asking for help as &with hands wide open,8 describing Farah,s many needs with little to offer in return. He was optimistic that he could reach agreements to enhance Farah,s economy and infrastructure, while not alienating Western aid partners or becoming beholden to Iran. Wasifi told PRToff his predecessor was offered opportunities for Iranian aid, but had refused, citing concern about negative impact on U.S. relations. Wasifi complained bitterly about the lack of GOA support and hoped the Iranians could solve Farah,s most pressing problems of security, roads and electricity. Wasifi quickly thanked ISAF and the U.S. for construction and humanitarian aid and repeatedly assured PRToff he had President Karzai,s personal support for the visit and had consulted U.S. and British officials prior to travel. (Note: Embassy is unaware of any such consultations. End Note.) Ghanghor said a pre-visit meeting with Karzai had been upbeat with the President authorizing the Governor to sign anything in the national interest that would enhance provincial prosperity. Karzai, reported Ghanghor, emphasized hopes for electricity, road construction and commercial centers.

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Border Issues  
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14. (C) The first discussions in Bejand focused on the concept that &good fences make good neighbors.8 They agreed that weapons, narcotics trafficking and associated kidnappings were the greatest mutual challenges, which could be addressed by combined efforts. South Khorosan officials pressed Wasifi on his responsibility to seal the Farah side of the border. The Iranians stated that no aid would be forthcoming without action on this issue. Both sides agreed to better legal cooperation in kidnapping and smuggling cases. While Wasifi agreed to secure the border, he later admitted to PRToff he had neither the resources nor a plan to accomplish this task. According to Wasifi and Farah border security officials, much of the border is presently defined by a two-meter high dirt wall or easily movable metal towers. South Khorosan agreed to construct a customs check point and commerce centers in Farah when the border was sufficiently controlled.

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Economic Expansion  
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15. (C) The economic protocol signed during the meeting contains eighteen agreements with emphasis on importation of electricity and fuel, agricultural exchanges, construction of roads, 100 wells, health clinics, and shopping centers, with Wasifi choosing the locations at his discretion. South Khorosan officials promised a number of projects to assist Farah,s development, including providing free medicines. They also proposed building a 132 kilowatt power plant and selling the electricity across the border. They also suggested extending three existing Iranian roads into Farah City to facilitate commerce: Dokohana, Mealac 75 (old name: Chai Mohammad Omar) and Mealac 73, starting in the southwest, west and northwest of Iran respectively. The Dokohana and Mealac 75 routes would facilitate commerce from the Persian Gulf to Farah and partially reconstruct the ancient Silk

Road. Wasifi rejected the northwestern Mealac 73 route as too costly, due to mountainous terrain, and too dangerous, as it would cross Shindand, an area notorious for lawlessness. The Governor felt there was excessive pressure to allow construction of the northwestern route, as he was presented three times with an agreement separate from the protocols specifically authorizing this road. Wasifi declined to sign each time and told Poloff he did not know why this road was handled separately. Ghanghor later explained the merchants of Shindand paid an Iranian bribe of USD 100,000 to ensure the road was completed. (Note: The protocol mentions the road as part of a previous agreement which South Khorosan wants reinstated. End Note.)

16. (C) Wasifi requested that quotas for subsidized high-quality gas and cement be set aside for Farah. Truckloads of illegally imported Iranian cement regularly travel Farah,s roads, as does expensive diluted diesel fuel. South Khorosan officials did not agree to the cement request, but instead volunteered to provide technology to Farah to construct its own cement plant. An unspecified amount of gas was decided upon for future export to the province. Wasifi told PRToff the fuel would be earmarked for agriculture so poppy could be replaced with crops requiring more water. Wasifi was impressed with a marble factory he toured and proposed a joint venture to mine the minerals and marble prevalent on both sides of the border to combine the skills of Iranian engineers and Afghan workers.

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The Agricultural Piece  
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17. (C) South Khorosan, home to the Jihad Agriculture Research and Education Center (JAREC), will allocate 100 scholarships to students from Farah over the next four years. The Iranian officials proposed building an Agriculture Research Center on 50 hectares of farmland outside of Farah City. In return, Farah promised to invite members of JAREC to conduct analysis and research at the center. South Khorosan also proposed giving sugar beet seed to Farah; the beets would be exported to Iran to be processed into sugar. Wasifi requested a dam along the Farah Rud to provide water and electricity, but was rebuffed. Wasifi speculated the denial was due to Iranian resistance to providing anything they could not ultimately control. Instead they proposed exporting irrigation drip systems which would make better use of available water. South Khorosan also proposed to create or rehabilitate Farah,s forested areas to alleviate erosion and severe dust problems in the Ana Dara District.

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Cultural and Education Exchange  
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18. (C) If the protocols are put into effect, an undetermined number of Afghan students will receive scholarships to the South Khorosan Provincial College and a library will be constructed in Farah to house Iranian-provided education and history reference materials. Afghan students would be admitted to medical, religious, teaching and arts programs previously denied to them. Vocational schools would be built to teach electrical and mechanical repair, and tourism will be promoted between the provinces. Wasifi told PRToff he refused the offer of Iranian schools, instead requesting text books, desks, chairs and lab materials for chemistry and biology departments. Wasifi worried about the proliferation of religious-style teaching pervading Farah. Discussions also focused on media exchanges with South Khorosan offering radio, television and press equipment and as would the creation of films and television programs for Farah.

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Treatment of Afghans still in Iran

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¶9. (C) Wasifi pushed South Khorosan officials for better treatment of Afghans still living in Iran. Presently, Afghan children are not able to start school until two to three months into the school year due to a perpetual lack of facilities and teachers. With Afghan refugees having spent over 20 years in Iran, the argument lacks credibility. The Iranian officials agreed to teach children equally. Wasifi also pushed for identity cards to allow refugees freedom of travel and work opportunities. He was proud to be the first Farah governor to meet with Afghan refugees (approximately 300) in Bejand. Iranian officials also promised tents, blankets and food for 300 returned Afghan families.

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The Final Tally  
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¶10. (C) Ghanghor explained the implications of the protocols were twofold: 1) Iranians wanted to show their assistance would be more effective and of better quality than the U.S.; and 2) they wanted to ensure Afghanistan remained a weak neighbor. Ghanghor expects Iranian workers coming into Farah will be members of their intelligence services; however, he believes the growth of infrastructure will outweigh any potential drawbacks. He feels the influx of Iranian

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construction will not affect ISAF/U.S. relations.

¶11. (C) Ultimately, mere promises of construction and cooperation will not help Farah's ailing economy or stop cross-border smuggling. President Karzai's mid-January trip to Iran was put on hold indefinitely, so the protocols remain unendorsed by the GOA. Wasifi plans to continue to push for their ratification, but admits he has no power to force the President to act. Ghanghor stated to PRToff he would push for presidential action even if discouraged by Wasifi. Farah's citizens, meanwhile, merely shrug and say, "It will be good if something happens."

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More to Come?  
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¶12. (C) Comment: Governor Wasifi anxiously awaited feedback on how his trip was received, not wanting to antagonize Western donors by accepting Iranian support. Wasifi was extremely vague, however, in recounting details of the trip or agreements signed. He did not recall dates or details of the agreements, which were subsequently supplied by Deputy Governor Ghanghor. Wasifi omitted his meeting with the previous governor of Farah, who is now an Iranian senator. The Iranians gave Wasifi a black Matzu SUV, which he claims he donated to the people of Iran, while the Iranians say he is still in possession of it. Wasifi has received invitations to visit the Iranian province of Baluchistan on Farah's southern border for similar discussions and reported Iran hoped to construct roads and open the border to Nimroz and Helmond Provinces to facilitate movement of Iranian goods from the Persian Gulf. Although little has yet resulted from these talks, the multiple discussions indicate the possibility of a large scale, coordinated Iranian plan. End Comment.  
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